Course Description:
This course will lead students into critical thinking about important concepts related to poverty and discrimination.

This course will feature a blending of economic reasoning from theoretical and empirical perspectives, which I hope will become part of the students' toolkit in their further endeavors. The students will come out of the course becoming a critical and intelligent participants in public policy debates, learn to form their own policy recommendations based on their own analysis.

The syllabus below will provide details about what to cover in each topic. For each topic, the plan is as follows. First, I will provide the background for the topic; Then we will discuss the rest of the papers and relevant book chapters in class. When we finish a topic, each student will write up a summary of what he/she learned from the readings and discussions, as well as any additional thoughts and questions. I will announce the deadline for each assignment in class.

The readings for each class are assigned in detail below. It is important that you read them before the class. I will ask everyone to contribute in the class discussions. The participations and writings will count toward the course grade. If you are not active in discussions, you will not learn too much and you will receive low grades (just so you know, I will have no sympathy for slacking students).

In reading the papers or book chapters, all students are expected to ask themselves the following questions:

- What is the main issue? Why is it interesting?
- What are the existing literature prior to the study?
- What are the main weaknesses of previous studies? What is new that this paper attempts to bring to the topic? Is it a new method? Or is it a new data set? Or is it a new way to examine the question?
- What are the main results? What are the key assumptions necessary for the results? Are these assumptions testable? Do you have issues with these assumptions?
- What are the implications of the results?
- Do you have any critical comments about the paper?
Course Requirement and Grading:
A term paper will be due at the end of the course (due date: April 27, 2009). In the paper the student is required to summarize how his/her views about poverty, poverty alleviation, inequality, discrimination have been affected by this course; and also propose any new ideas and thoughts about these topics.

The grade for the course will be based on the students’ class participation (30%), summaries of covered topics over the course of the semester (30%) and on their term paper (40%).

Textbook:


Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

January 8: Introduction to Poverty
• Background/Introduction  
• Poverty: Definition, Measurement, Trends
  Readings:
  • LANG, Chapter 2, Chapter 4

January 15: Anti-poverty policies: Welfare Programs
Readings:  
LANG, Chapter 3, Chapter 5  
LANG, Chapter 3, Section 2; Chapter 9

January 22: Anti-Poverty Policies: EITC and Job Training Programs
Readings:  
LANG, Chapter 3, Section 3  
LANG, Chapter 5, Section 4

January 29: Racial Inequality
Readings:  
LANG, Chapter 5, Section 1
• Measures of Inequality: Gini Index (Additional Material)
• Black-White Wage Inequality
  Readings:  
  LANG: Chapter 11, Section 1, 2
February 5: Gender Inequality

Readings:

February 12: Educational Policies to Reduce Inequality

Readings:
- LANG, Chapter 8

February 19: Discrimination: Theory

Readings:
- LANG, Chapter 10

February 26: Discrimination in Consumer Markets

Readings:
LANG, Chapter 13, Section 1 & 2

March 5: Discrimination in Law Enforcement

Readings:
LANG, Chapter 13, Section 3
March 12 (Spring Recess): ENJOY YOUR BREAK!

March 19: Sex Discrimination
Readings:
LANG, Chapter 14

March 26: Discrimination in Labor Market: I
Readings:
LANG, Chapter 11

April 2: Discrimination in Labor Market: II
Readings:

April 9: Affirmative Action
Readings:
LANG, Chapter 11, Section 5 & 6
LANGE, Chapter 12, Section 3

April 16: Review, Summary and Concluding Thoughts.

Term Paper Due: April 27 by 5pm either by email, or in hard copy.